

GARDEN

Rosie Reed & Finbar Ward

Housekeeping

Curated by Grant Klarich Johnson and Frances Lazare

May 26 - July 21, 2018

In *Housekeeping*, Rosie Reed and Finbar Ward unfold a strange, apocalyptic geography inspired by the motifs of the studio. While brightly colored stalactites drip from the ceiling, white panels are locked into an unstable grid on the floor by a border of goo that seeps from below. *Housekeeping*, conceived as an integrated installation, blends Reed and Ward's heretofore distinct practices. *Housekeeping's* collaborative conceit results from the prompt of the exhibition's curators, Grant Johnson and Frances Lazare, who challenged Reed and Ward to explore how their existing romantic relationship might inform an aesthetic synthesis of their work. This play of collaborative doubles is extended by the role of Garden's proprietors, Britte Geijer and Zachary Korol-Gold, whose gallery, located within their Angeleno Heights home, provides a uniquely intimate and domestic site for this project.

As such, *Housekeeping* intentionally engages the mythic and often fraught trope of the artistic couple: Pollock and Krasner, Rivera and Kahlo, Rauschenberg and Johns, Gilbert and George, Stieglitz and O'Keefe, Christo and Jean Claude, Jay-Z and Beyonce, Ono and Lennon. Reviving the specter of these often ill-fated or star-crossed modernisms, *Housekeeping's* arrival in our present reads these fantasies of avant-garde, utopian collaboration as seductive fictions. Aping the gendered imbalances of the aforementioned iconic couples, tragically inflected by irreconcilable hierarchies as well as critical contrasts of style and success, *Housekeeping* plumbs form's ability to index a relationship. Ward deploys painted white MDF panels supinely on an imperiled floor, evoking both the much ballyhooed orientation of Pollock's ingenuity while also harkening to its contestation by evoking the unruly flows of Helen Frankenthaler and the synthetic foams of Lynda Benglis. Meanwhile, instead of a docile, horizontal body a la Titian, Reed's forms threaten the negative space of the gallery from above, claiming a suggestively phallic motif subsequently colored and textured to the point of both toxic abjection, and flamboyant, hedonistic indulgence.

For both Reed and Ward, the iconography and labor of the studio furnish both form and content. This new installation engenders a space of oppositions flecked with painterly cues. A field of clean, rectangular white boards, unstable upon the floor, juxtapose with an oozing amorphousness at their margins, unsettling the grid's theoretical rigidity as a modernist trope. The extremely white quietude of the floor recalls the asceticism of Robert Rauschenberg's white paintings or Agnes Martin's grids. Meanwhile, opposed to this negation of content or pictorial incident, the sparkling ceiling welcomes the viewer into a flurry of imagistic and associative possibilities, from the dazzle of Aladdin's cave of wonders, to high-speed photography of gunshots or splashing pools, to the fantastical palette of science fiction or children's television, from Fraggie Rock, Lisa Frank, Sea Punk, to My Little Pony. As such, the room concretizes two major approaches to abstraction, balancing a purified singularity against riotous plurality. The contrast of floor and ceiling hyperbolizes the dueling painterly binaries of expressionism and minimalism, binaries that have long grounded dramatizations of painting, figured by oppositions such as Titian and Leonardo, or Rubens and Poussin. Inviting viewers to traverse this space, Reed and Ward usher them into an aesthetic no-man's land, a battlefield of painting's becoming, a moment of cease-fire, arrested action, and potential threat.

Embracing a visceral intermediality, Reed and Ward defy modernist mandates for medium specificity and self-consciously mime modernist painterly motifs—the drip, the expressive gesture, the picture plane, the

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drop cloth—and amass them into sculpture. Established by artists as diverse as Donald Judd, Sam Gilliam, Phyllida Barlow, and Jessica Stockholder, a blurred boundary between sculpture and painting has become well-worn and legitimate territory. Such inquiry troubles the separation of media, and, especially in the context of this exhibition particularly, points to a confusion between subjectivities and demarcations such as the limits of the body or the conventions of gender.

Scattered throughout the house beyond the gallery proper, Reed and Ward's paintings, bookends, candelabras, mixing sticks, and cups extend the texture of the exhibition into the spaces of Geijer and Korol-Gold's home. By mixing these anesthetized props of the studio into Garden's living spaces, they concretize the blur between domestic and aesthetic labor invoked by the exhibition's title.

Text by Grant Klarich Johnson and Frances Lazare

Rosie Reed (b. 1991, London) is an artist living and working in London. She completed her BA in Fine Art at The Ruskin School of Art, Oxford University, in 2013 and her Masters in Sculpture at The Royal College of Art in 2017. Group exhibitions include *Adventures and Curiosities* at Hauser and Wirth, *Flat Pack* at Camden Arts Centre and *Herland* at Bosse & Baum.

Finbar Ward (b. 1990, London) is an artist living and working in London. He completed his BA in Fine Art at The Ruskin School of Art, Oxford University, in 2013. He is represented by Fold Gallery, London, Geukens & DeVil in Antwerp and Annex 14 in Zurich. Solo exhibitions include *In Waiting* at The British Embassy in Paris, *In Absence* at Fold Gallery, London and *Head Over Heels* at Annex 14, Zurich. Collections include The Saatchi Collection, The Cooreman Collection, The Vereecke Collection and The Casteleyn Collection.

About the curators:

Grant Klarich Johnson (b. 1989, Huntsville, Alabama) is a writer and curator based in Los Angeles. As a PhD candidate in the Department of Art History at the University of Southern California, his research focuses on contemporary art, fashion, and performance. He is currently at work on his dissertation, *Sheila Hicks: Weaving to the World*. In 2016, he curated *Lita Albuquerque: 20/20 Accelerando*, a new film installation and performance for the USC Fisher Museum of Art. His writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *Modern Painters*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *Surface*, among other publications. He has contributed to projects and publications at the Frick Collection, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, the USC Fisher Museum of Art, Paul Kasmin Gallery, and the Gund Gallery at Kenyon College. He has presented his research at institutions including the Courtauld, Yale University, and the University of Manchester. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Kenyon College, where he majored in studio art and English.

Frances Lazare (b. 1992, Houston) is an art historian, curator, and PhD student in the Department of Art History at the University of Southern California. Her research focuses on modern and contemporary art in the 19th through 21st centuries, with a particular emphasis on the history and theory of painting, and the origins of abstraction. She is at work on a project that examines queer and feminist sociability in and around the New York School of painters. Prior to joining USC, Lazare worked for two years as a member of the curatorial department at the Menil Collection in Houston, Texas. At the Menil, Lazare assisted on an exhibition and symposium examining the late work of American abstract painter Barnett Newman, among other projects. She holds a Bachelor of Arts with distinction from Smith College.